

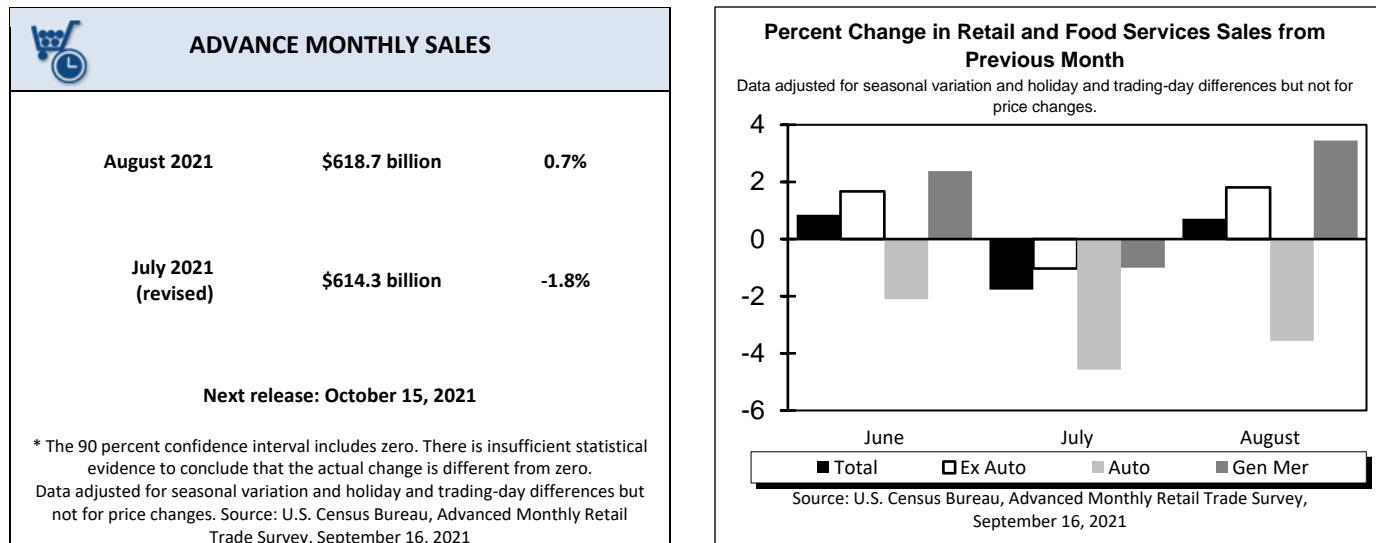
FOR RELEASE AT 8:30 AM EDT, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2021

ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES, AUGUST 2021

Release Number: CB21-145

Statement Regarding Natural Disasters: For information on the impact of natural disasters, including hurricanes, on the compilation of this report, please see the [Weather FAQs](#).

September 16, 2021 — The U.S. Census Bureau announced the following advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for August 2021:



Advance Estimates of U.S. Retail and Food Services

Advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for August 2021, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$618.7 billion, an increase of 0.7 percent (± 0.5 percent) from the previous month, and 15.1 percent (± 0.7 percent) above August 2020. Total sales for the June 2021 through August 2021 period were up 16.3 percent (± 0.5 percent) from the same period a year ago. The June 2021 to July 2021 percent change was revised from down 1.1 percent (± 0.5 percent) to down 1.8 percent (± 0.2 percent).

Retail trade sales were up 0.8 percent (± 0.5 percent) from July 2021, and up 13.1 percent (± 0.7 percent) above last year. Clothing and clothing accessories stores were up 38.8 percent (± 3.3 percent) from August 2020, while gasoline stations were up 35.7 percent (± 1.6 percent) from last year.

General Information

The September 2021 Advance Monthly Retail report is scheduled for release on October 15, 2021 at 8:30

Data Inquiries

Economic Indicators Division, Retail Indicator Branch
301-763-2713
eid.retail.indicator.branch@census.gov

Media Inquiries

Public Information Office
301-763-3030
pio@census.gov



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census.gov

a.m. EDT. View the full schedule in the Economic Briefing Room: <www.census.gov/economic-indicators/>. The full text and tables of this release can be found at <www.census.gov/retail/>.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the Census Bureau's full retail and food services sample. A stratified random sampling method is used to select approximately 5,500 retail and food services firms whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over three million retail and food services firms.

Survey Description

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade and Food Services Survey to provide an early estimate of monthly sales by kind of business for retail and food service firms located in the United States. Each month, questionnaires are mailed to a probability sample of approximately 5,500 employer firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Advance sales estimates are computed using a link relative estimator. For each detailed industry, we compute a ratio of current-to-previous month weighted sales using data from units for which we have obtained usable responses for both the current and previous month. For each detailed industry, the advance total sales estimates for the current month is computed by multiplying this ratio by the preliminary sales estimate for the previous month (derived from the larger MRTS) at the appropriate industry level. Total estimates for broader industries are computed as the sum of the detailed industry estimates. The link relative estimate is used because imputation is not performed for most nonrespondents in MRTS. For a limited number of nonresponding companies that have influential effects on the estimates, sales may be estimated based on historical performance of that company. The monthly estimates are benchmarked to the annual survey estimates from the Annual Retail Trade Survey once available. The estimates are adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading day differences. Additional information on MRTS and MRTS can be found on the Census Bureau website at: <www.census.gov/retail/>.

Reliability of Estimates

Because the estimates presented in this report are based on a sample survey, they contain sampling error and nonsampling error.

Sampling error is the difference between the estimate and the result that would be obtained from a complete enumeration of the sampling frame conducted under the same survey conditions. This error occurs because only a subset of the entire sampling frame is measured in a sample survey. Standard errors

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and coefficients of variation (CV), as given in Table 3 of this report, are estimated measures of sampling variation.

The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90 percent confidence interval. If, for example, the percent change estimate is +1.2 percent and its estimated standard error is 0.9 percent, then the margin of sampling error is $\pm 1.753 \times 0.9$ percent or ± 1.6 percent, and the 90 percent confidence interval is –0.4 percent to +2.8 percent. If the interval contains 0, then one does not have sufficient evidence to conclude at the 90 percent confidence level that the change is different from zero and therefore the change is not statistically significant. Estimated changes shown in the text are statistically significant unless otherwise noted. For a monthly total, the median estimated coefficient of variation is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value $\pm 1.753 \times CV \times$ (the estimated monthly total). The Census Bureau recommends that individuals using estimates in this report incorporate this information into their analyses, as sampling error could affect the conclusions drawn from the estimates.

Nonsampling error encompasses all other factors that contribute to the total error of a sample survey estimate. This type of error can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, mistakes in the recording and coding of data, and other errors of collection, response, coverage, or processing. Although nonsampling error is not measured directly, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the process to minimize this type of error.

Statement Regarding COVID-19 Impact

The Census Bureau continues to monitor response and data quality and has determined that estimates in this release meet publication standards. For more information, see [COVID-19 FAQs](#).

Weather Information

For information on the impact of weather events on the compilation of this report, please see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on our website at:

[<www.census.gov/retail/marts_weather_faqs.html>](http://www.census.gov/retail/marts_weather_faqs.html)

RESOURCES

The Rest of the Consumer Spending Story

Retail and services together represent what's commonly referred to as consumer spending. Quarterly Services Survey (QSS) revenue comprises roughly 2/3 of the personal consumption expenditures component of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measured by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).

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The second quarter 2021 Quarterly Services Report was released on September 9, 2021 at 10:00 AM. Learn about historical revenue trends for certain industries going back 15 years and other data, such as in-patient days and discharges for hospitals, by visiting <<https://www.census.gov/services/index.html>>

API

The Census Bureau's application programming interface lets developers create custom apps to reach new users and makes key demographic, socio-economic and housing statistics more accessible than ever before. <www.census.gov/developers/>

FRED Mobile App



Receive the latest updates on the nation's key economic indicators by downloading the FRED App <<https://fred.stlouisfed.org/fred-mobile/>> for both Apple and Android devices. FRED, the signature database of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, now incorporates the Census Bureau's 13 economic indicators.

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* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. There is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different from zero.

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Table 1. Estimated Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(Total sales estimates are shown in millions of dollars and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Trade Survey, and administrative records.)

NAICS ¹ code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted							Adjusted ²				
		8 Month Total		2021			2020		2021			2020	
		2021	% Chg. 2020	Aug. ³ (a)	Jul. (p)	Jun. (r)	Aug.	Jul.	Aug. ³ (a)	Jul. (p)	Jun. (r)	Aug. (r)	
441 4411, 4412 44111 4413 442 4421 4422 443 444 4441 445 4451 4453 446 44611 447 448 44811 44812 44814 4482 451 452 4521 4529 45291 45299 453 454 4541 722	Retail & food services, total	4,807,733	20.9	629,145	633,682	635,437	545,307	549,416	618,676	614,313	625,405	537,720	533,517
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	3,768,129	18.5	501,394	499,896	498,169	429,379	433,183	497,178	488,324	493,387	428,004	424,069
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	4,432,888	20.0	576,383	580,225	584,134	506,577	510,540	569,320	565,044	577,097	501,354	497,521
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	3,393,284	17.2	448,632	446,439	446,866	390,649	394,307	447,822	439,055	445,079	391,638	388,073
	Retail	4,276,468	19.8	555,001	557,402	562,929	488,949	494,905	546,692	542,351	554,388	483,162	481,303
	GAFO ⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	127,018	124,474	109,556	106,664	(*)	126,227	127,960	107,065	107,125
	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1,039,604	30.5	127,751	133,786	137,268	115,928	116,233	121,498	125,989	132,018	109,716	109,448
	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	965,492	32.0	117,939	124,023	127,542	106,956	107,082	112,109	116,673	122,755	100,997	100,831
	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	98,619	100,052	86,015	84,691	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	9,763	9,726	8,972	9,151	(*)	9,316	9,263	8,719	8,617
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	94,725	35.2	12,795	12,386	12,008	11,017	10,625	12,495	12,049	12,093	10,812	10,346
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,780	6,504	5,847	5,957	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	(S)	(S)	5,170	4,668	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	60,193	32.1	8,069	7,992	7,983	6,839	6,555	8,251	8,511	8,593	6,986	6,981
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	325,334	15.4	39,878	41,653	45,421	36,664	39,430	39,024	38,690	39,095	36,714	35,906
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	36,790	39,531	32,612	34,870	(*)	33,598	34,078	32,035	31,190
445	Food & beverage stores.....	586,224	2.1	75,815	77,316	74,890	72,353	75,085	75,832	74,455	75,073	71,772	72,715
4451	Grocery stores	523,529	1.3	67,936	68,761	66,531	64,500	66,892	67,800	66,436	66,731	63,861	64,944
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	6,228	6,058	5,813	6,106	(*)	5,724	6,034	5,825	5,701
446	Health & personal care stores	249,313	10.1	31,986	31,795	32,396	28,918	29,573	32,374	32,312	32,559	29,599	29,811
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	27,035	27,330	24,757	25,460	(*)	27,615	27,746	25,236	25,691
447	Gasoline stations	374,845	32.1	52,762	53,457	51,303	38,730	38,876	49,356	49,269	48,308	36,366	35,996
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	183,586	64.2	25,903	25,801	25,301	18,968	17,779	25,795	25,761	26,464	18,578	18,067
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	(S)	(S)	379	405	(*)	(S)	(S)	406	451
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,348	3,279	2,386	2,373	(*)	3,295	3,305	2,480	2,383
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	10,568	10,180	7,768	7,077	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,450	3,328	2,822	2,722	(*)	3,298	3,442	2,249	2,645
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	69,761	36.1	9,884	9,213	9,345	8,218	8,011	9,018	9,269	9,449	7,526	8,108
452	General merchandise stores.....	525,857	11.0	70,749	69,096	67,458	62,304	61,674	70,670	68,311	68,999	61,165	61,745
4521	Department stores	83,508	21.5	12,267	11,652	11,263	9,879	9,384	12,391	12,100	12,121	9,636	9,714
4529	Other general merch. stores....	(*)	(*)	(*)	57,444	56,195	52,425	52,290	(*)	56,211	56,878	51,529	52,031
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	49,584	48,205	45,080	44,706	(*)	48,375	48,840	43,980	44,439
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,860	7,990	7,345	7,584	(*)	7,836	8,038	7,549	7,592
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	106,268	28.4	14,086	14,374	14,504	11,842	11,992	13,998	13,809	13,734	11,744	11,505
454	Nonstore retailers	660,758	15.7	85,323	80,533	85,052	77,168	79,072	88,381	83,926	88,003	82,184	80,675
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	72,736	77,056	70,505	72,123	(*)	75,063	79,113	74,608	73,073
722	Food services & drinking places	531,265	30.6	74,144	76,280	72,508	56,358	54,511	71,984	71,962	71,017	54,558	52,214

(*) Advance estimates are not available for this kind of business.

(NA) Not available (a) Advance estimate (p) Preliminary estimate (r) Revised estimate

(S) Estimate does not meet publication standards because of high sampling variability (coefficient of variation is greater than 30%), poor response quality

(total quantity response rate is less than 50%), or other concerns about the estimate's quality.

(1) For a full description of the NAICS codes used in this table, see <<https://www.census.gov/naics/>>.

(2) Estimates are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variation and for holiday and trading day differences, but not for price changes. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-13ARIMA-SEATS program. The factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted estimates shown in this table. Year-to-date seasonally adjusted sales estimates are not tabulated. Adjustment factors and explanatory material can be found on the Internet at <<http://www.census.gov/retail>>.

(3) Advance estimates are based on early reports obtained from a small sample of firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS) sample. All other estimates are from the MRTS sample.

(4) GAFO represents firms which specialize in department store types of merchandise and is comprised of furniture & home furnishings (442), electronics & appliances (443), clothing & accessories (448), sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, and book (451), general merchandise (452), office supply, stationery, and gift stores (453).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, September 16, 2021. Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability. Additional information on

confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at

<www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html>.

Table 2. Estimated Change in Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Trade Survey, and administrative records.)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Percent Change ¹					
		Aug. 2021 Advance from --		Jul. 2021 Preliminary from --		Jun. 2021 through Aug. 2021 from --	
		Jul. 2021 (p)	Aug. 2020 (r)	Jun. 2021 (r)	Jul. 2020 (r)	Mar. 2021 through May 2021	Jun. 2020 through Aug. 2020
	Retail & food services, total	0.7	15.1	-1.8	15.1	-0.7	16.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	1.8	16.2	-1.0	15.2	1.3	16.7
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	0.8	13.6	-2.1	13.6	-1.2	14.8
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	2.0	14.3	-1.4	13.1	0.8	14.7
	Retail	0.8	13.1	-2.2	12.7	-1.8	14.1
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	-3.6	10.7	-4.6	15.1	-7.8	15.1
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ...	-3.9	11.0	-5.0	15.7	-8.2	15.8
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	3.7	15.6	-0.4	16.5	-1.6	17.2
443	Electronics & appliance stores	-3.1	18.1	-1.0	21.9	1.4	27.0
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	0.9	6.3	-1.0	7.8	-6.7	7.2
445	Food & beverage stores.....	1.8	5.7	-0.8	2.4	2.1	3.9
4451	Grocery stores	2.1	6.2	-0.4	2.3	2.6	3.9
446	Health & personal care stores	0.2	9.4	-0.8	8.4	2.0	10.8
447	Gasoline stations	0.2	35.7	2.0	36.9	5.8	37.8
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	0.1	38.8	-2.7	42.6	3.7	44.5
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	-2.7	19.8	-1.9	14.3	-5.2	14.7
452	General merchandise stores.....	3.5	15.5	-1.0	10.6	0.0	12.5
4521	Department stores	2.4	28.6	-0.2	24.6	7.7	25.8
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	1.4	19.2	0.5	20.0	2.5	21.3
454	Nonstore retailers	5.3	7.5	-4.6	4.0	-2.1	7.8
722	Food services & drinking places	0.0	31.9	1.3	37.8	8.0	36.7

(p) Preliminary estimate (r) Revised estimate

(1) Estimates shown in this table are derived from adjusted estimates provided in Table 1 of this report.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, September 16, 2021. Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability.

Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at

<www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html>.

Table 3. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability and Revision to Advance Estimates Aug. 2021

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey and Monthly Retail Trade Survey)

NAICS Code	Kind of Business	Median CV Current Mo. (%)	Median standard error Percent change			Revision for month-to-month change	
			Previous Mo. to Current Mo.	Previous Qtr. to Current Qtr.	Current Mo. to same Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	Retail & food services,						
	total	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.4
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.5
	Retail, total	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.4	0.7	0.6	1.3	0.3	0.7
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1.4	0.8	0.6	1.4	0.3	0.6
442	Furniture & home furn. stores.....	2.9	1.0	0.7	1.6	0.4	1.0
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.6	0.7	0.5	1.2	-0.2	1.7
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	2.2	0.8	0.6	1.4	-0.2	0.7
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.1
4451	Grocery stores	0.7	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.3
446	Health & personal care stores	3.1	0.8	0.4	1.8	0.2	0.6
447	Gasoline stations	1.2	0.4	0.4	0.9	0.3	0.5
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	2.7	0.9	1.0	1.9	1.0	1.0
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	2.8	0.7	0.9	2.0	0.7	0.9
452	General merchandise stores.....	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.5
4521	Department stores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	4.7	2.8	1.8	4.7	0.5	0.9
454	Nonstore retailers	1.6	0.4	0.4	1.0	-0.3	1.6
722	Food services & drinking places	3.5	1.0	0.7	1.7	0.6	0.4

(1) Estimated measures of sampling variability are based on estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation or holiday or trading day variation. Medians are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.

(2) These columns provide measures of the difference between the advance-to-preliminary and preliminary-to-final estimates of month-to-month change for the same pair of months as measured by the Advance sample and MRTS sample. The average and median revisions are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, September 16, 2021. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html>.